

Enea Sormenti

I FIRST met Enea Sormenti in the revolutionary youth movement. He had been active in it for many years in Italy, and the countries to which he had been banished. He was one of the most active spirits in the reestablishment of the youth International after its collapse following the beginning of the world war.

Sormenti, whose real name is Vittorio Vidali, is the son of poor parents, and was an avid student of the socialist classics and well known in the socialist youth movement of Trieste from



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the age of 17. The Austrian government persecuted him for his activities, and he was twice expelled from school; some period or other of his early life was spent in prison.

It was under Italian control of Trieste that the real persecution commenced. Sormenti was arrested scores of times, carried from one prison to another, tortured, condemned to imprisonment, and wounded by fascists in the frequent street encounters that took place at the time. He was systematically hunted, in school and at work, at one time sentenced to death. The notorious squadron in Casal di Monferrato wounded him severely in the head.

His father was arrested as a hostage, and made to serve four months in prison. His mother died, curiously, just a year before Sormenti was made to appear at Ellis Island for a hearing on his deportation.

The persecutions of fascism forced him into exile in Austria, and later, in Checko-Slovakia, Germany and northern Africa. In Germany he was arrested, sentenced, interned but he finally escaped from a certain death of starva-

By Max Shachtman

tion in the concentration camps of northern Prussia. He had been interned by the Germans at the request of the Italian government.

Driven from pillar to post on the continent, he had gone to the Italian colonies of northern Africa to carry on anti-militarist propaganda there among the Italian soldiers at the risk, every moment, of his liberty and life.

Sormenti finally left the continent for America. Without a minute's rest, he entered here the movement with which he had worked in Europe. For some two years he toured the country almost without interruption save for his intense work at the office of the Italian section of the Workers Party. He became secretary of the section's bureau, and editor of its official organ, *Il Lavoratore*. In all of his activities, and in his writings, he maintained an unbroken line of principled policy, regardless of the sympathies or antipathies he aroused.

It was particularly in his activities against Fascism, in the Anti-Fascist Alliance of North America, that he gained his greatest popularity among the Italian workers of this country. The countless anti-Fascist meetings which he addressed, and the branches of the Alliance which he organized, brought him to the forefront of the Italian labor movement in America. The workers learned to know him by his sharp and merciless tongue, and by his fearless personal conduct. Many times he organized or entered meetings in which he faced gangs of fascist assassins, for he has never flinched from any kind of a fight, as his scars will show.

He continued his work also in the Lega Profughi d'Italia, (League for Italian Refugees), which owes a great deal to his incessant energy. In this league were organized the hundreds of Italian workers who were forced to flee from the butchery of Fascism. Sormenti put into this work of organizing the refugees and exposing the frightful terror of Fascism in Italy and in the United States, all his enthusiasm and spirit.

It is because of his relentless struggle against Fascism that he was seized by the agents of Mussolini in the United States, the department of labor of Mr. John W. Davis, and proposed for deportation to Italy. To be returned to Italy now, with Mussolini tightening the screws of torture and suppression, is to deliver Sormenti to the

slaughter house. Davis knew this.

Sormenti will not be surprised at the action of the American authorities. He has experienced the same treatment at the hands of the reactionary governments of four nations. He has no illusions about the extent to which the officials of the United States adhere to the tradition of the right of asylum to political refugees. Sormenti knows that only the workers and progressives of the country will passionately defend this tradition, and tear him safe from the dripping claws of Fascism.

His splendid struggle against the



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Fascists will bring him the solidarity of the American workers. They will make his cause their cause and halt the sinister hand of John W. Davis.

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